TROUBADOUR THEME MADE INTO PLAY BY BUSINESS MAN

Julia Arthur Selects Lines From "Seremonda" That Most Appeal to Her in Poetic Beauty

By JULIA ARTHUR.

(Appearing in William Lindsey's "Seremonda" at the Criterion Theatre.)

The following are my favorite lines of "Seremonda" because they best indicate the poetic beauty of the play and also stamp its distinctive qualities as a decided romantic drama. Many of the lines set themselves to music, more of them than I have selected, but these are the ones that sing themselves through the brain like poems.

[Mr. Lindsey is a Boston business man who is a poet. He has long made a study of the Troubadours and their times. "Seremonda," which was published under the title of "The Red Wine of Roussillon," is placed in the Troubadour period. The theme comes down from the twelfth century and has been used by Boccaccio and other authors. Raimon is absent on one of the crusades. Rumors come of his death. His wife, Seremonda, and Guilhem fall in love.]

SEREMONDA.

I'D be a spendthrift with the day
And buy full value of the "joy of life."

[Seremonda goes to window and stands looking out.]

GUILHEM.

I hope I am at least a lark who mounts
On valiant wings to heaven. What shall I sing?

SEREMONDA.

I care not, just a verse or two, no more—
I love the hawk more than the simple lark—
A hawk, clear eyed, unhooded, strong of wing.

GUILHEM.

There is a new song that young Arnaut sings
In praise of Alazais. I am not sure
I have each word, and of the melody
There is, alas, no single note I know.
One line is beautiful beyond compare,
And all night long it whispered in my ears.

[Guilhem recites the lines.]

SONG.

We three, my lady, you and I—and Love—
We only know the secret of a treasure
Which blue eyed Hope alone may weigh and measure.
There's not its like in blissful heaven above.
I'll breathe the secret that we know so well—
My heart is yours—yours mine, and I confess
I care no other treasure to possess.
Heaven hath no charms while here on earth we dwell—
We three, my lady, you and I—and Love.

[When Guilhem finishes, Seremonda turns to him, her face aflame with love.]

SEREMONDA.

Guilhem!

GUILHEM.

My queen.

[Guilhem falls on his knees and kisses Seremonda's hand.]

SEREMONDA.

[Lifting Guilhem.]
A dog may kiss my hand.

[Guilhem kisses Seremonda's cheek.]

SEREMONDA.

My cheek is free to every noble guest.

[Guilhem seizes her in his arms and kisses her on the lips passionately.]

SEREMONDA.

You are no longer blind?

GUILHEM.

At last I look undazzled at the sun.

SEREMONDA.

You cannot touch and taste a distant sun.

[Guilhem kisses her again.]

GUILHEM.

I've longed for this sweet draught
As one, dying of thirst, who sees a spring
Beneath tall palm trees waving o'er the sands.

SEREMONDA.

You might have drunk a weary year ago—
The spring was here and free to take.

GUILHEM.

[Trembling.]
There's more than water in that draught.

SEREMONDA.

It stirs your pulse? Sometimes I've had the fear
That in your veins there was no ardent blood.

GUILHEM.

I thought of my good lord.
My oath of loyalty. That was the cage
Through whose strong bars I could not break.

[Guilhem leaves the window and paces up and down before the fireplace. Seremonda follows him and puts her hand on his arm.]

SEREMONDA.

Your master and my wicked lord was dead,
And we were free. My heart was thirsty, too;
My lips were parched with longing for your kiss.

GUILHEM.

We had sure news but one short week ago.
I prayed that he might live.

SEREMONDA.

I wished him dead.
He stole me from the blood besprinkled church,
And robbery can give no valid right.

GUILHEM.

Yet he was good to me.
And e'en I think he loved you too.

SEREMONDA.

He loved red wine as well.
He loved his sword, his armor and his dog.
I might have stood the equal of them all
But the black charger that he rode to war.

[There is the sound of a distant trumpet. Guilhem and Seremonda go to window.]

GUILHEM.

Who think you summons us?

SEREMONDA.

'Tis far away. 'Tis naught.

GUILHEM.

Only the horn of Death can frighten us.
We must be fair to Raimon, who has heard
The fatal trumpet. May he rest in peace.

SEREMONDA.

I hope he suffers rightly for his sins.

GUILHEM.

He like an elder brother was to me,
And in the forest once he saved my life:
I'd fallen and was faint and weaponless,
The boar's sharp tusks a hand-breadth from my side.

SEREMONDA.

Had Raimon been as close to me as you
He'd clasped me in his arms a year ago.

[Seremonda returns to seat at window. Guilhem makes gesture of appeal, and falls on his knees before her. Seremonda relents and caresses his hair with her hand.]

SEREMONDA.

Forgive me, Guilhem; hate me not.
I love you none the less because my heart
Hath little honor in it—nought but love.
Kiss me again.

[They embrace and kiss.]

GUILHEM.

'Tis like a fabled fountain of the East,
And he who drinks must ever thirst for more.

SEREMONDA.

We've come a long and weary road to reach
This heaven at last. You must be good to me.
My Guilhem. For until this blessed hour
I've had but glimpses of the joy of life.
Tell me when first love blossomed in your heart?

GUILHEM.

I always loved you—as the lark the sky.
When Raimon told me ere he went away
My service was to be on you alone
I asked no more of heaven.

SEREMONDA.

But when changed love to passion—
Tell me that.

GUILHEM.

Do you remember that soft night in June,
When we together in this window sat,
And watched the moon float through the yielding clouds?

SEREMONDA.

Never shall I forget.

GUILHEM.

You asked me, "If a lady gave to you
Glances of love, would you dare answer them?"

SEREMONDA.

And you said, "Yes, if I were only sure
Her looks had truly shown her heart."

GUILHEM.

And then you gazed at me until I saw
The moon no more, but only your blue eyes.
And then you smiled and whispered, "Tell me now,
Is this glance true or false?" I answered then,
"May all things be as please you best."

[The trumpet sounds nearer, and Guilhem goes to window.]

A moment sooner—I had seen them pass.
Now they are hidden by the winding road.

SEREMONDA.

What care we who they are? It matters not.

[Guilhem returns and embraces Seremonda.]

GUILHEM.

Nought matters when I hold you in my arms.

SEREMONDA.

If I am yours, my master, tell me this:
What will you do with me?

GUILHEM.

I'll take you to the priest to-morrow morn.
We shall be wedded ere the sun is high;
We'll gallop to my castle in the fields
My little castle with the lilied moat—
And there I think you'll find the joy of life.

SEREMONDA.

The joy of life!

GUILHEM.

And many happy years we there shall dwell.
We three, my lady, you and I—and Love.

[Guida rushes in pale and breathless.]

[Raimon, supposed to be dead, returns. What he learns arouses his suspicion.]

RAIMON.

His tongue is forked?—I' faith, I think you're right.
And there is deadly venom on it too.
To hear the names of those I love the best
Coupled so close did violence to my ears.
In Guilhem do I trust against the world.
Yet he's a creature of warm flesh and blood.
And Seremonda!—'faith she'd tempt a saint
To leave the joys of Paradise.

[Raimon starts up in passion.]

If I thought that their dewy lips had touched
I'd send them both to hell.

There's something wrong, I know not what or why.
I'm like a ship which, sailing through a mist,
Hears sounds of warning bells, but cannot tell
From whence they come.

[Raimon tries to learn the truth.]

GUILHEM.

I'd rather die than tell the name I love.
You have a boar spear ready in your hand.
Here is your mark.

[Raimon poises the spear as if to strike. Guilhem faces him without flinching. Raimon lets the point of the spear fall to the ground.]

RAIMON.

And be forever mocked by silent lips?
I bid you by your oath of loyalty,
The sacred pledge you gave me as my squire,
Tell me the name.

[Guilhem makes appealing gesture, but Raimon is obdurate.]

GUILHEM.

I trust you with my honor and my life.
It is the first rule of the singer's creed
To keep his lady's name hid in his breast.

[Raimon springs to his feet—catches Guilhem by the throat.]

RAIMON.

To hell with your sly, whining singer's rules.
And you shall follow them—the name, I say.

[He pushes Guilhem from him, who staggers back and falls. Guilhem rises to his feet and tears open his bliaut at the throat.]

[Guida, who speaks in the following scenes, is Seremonda's sister.]

GUIDA.

My sister Seremonda was not won
By pretty courtesies to melt the heart.
She was not wooed at all, but wed by force.

ERMENGARDA.

Yet did she make her vow. She's Raimon's wife.

GUIDA.

You're right. She had no choice. 'Twas Raimon's wife,
Or to be called another name less sweet!
Her joy is tempered by these memories.

GUIDA.

Oh, my sweet sister, think while yet there's time.

SEREMONDA.

Think, say you! By your side last night I lay;
I did not sleep. I thought of many things—
So many weary things until the dawn.
And only this was settled in my mind,
I would not live with Raimon. I could not.
The years spread out before me like the sea,
Each day a lie, each moment a deceit,
Each night a dream of hell.

GUIDA.

Big other wives have lived who had no love
To give their lords.

SEREMONDA.

They have. I've seen them smile.

GUIDA.

Oh, Seremonda, I am filled with fear.
When saw you Guilhem last?

SEREMONDA.

At early dawn a moment ere he went.
'Twas in the shadow of the hawthorn hedge,
Where we have parted many times before.
He held me in his arms and kissed my brow.
He would not kiss my lips, although I begged
That he would press them once. He shook his head,
And smiled at me and wiped my tears away.
So kind was he I did not miss the kiss,
Until he'd left me and it was too late.
A long time looked he in my eyes and said—
"Sweetheart, we may ne'er ride across the fields,
Nor reach the castle with the lilied moat;
Yet somewhere we shall find the joy of life.
We three together—you and I—and Love."

[Guida bursts into tears. Seremonda tries to comfort her.]

[Raimon kills Guilhem and serves his heart to Seremonda at a banquet.]

JULIA ARTHUR AS "SEREMONDA"

JULIA ARTHUR IN THE TOWER SCENE OF "SEREMONDA"

IVY TROUTMAN AS GUIDA SISTER OF "SEREMONDA"

THE FALL OF RAIMON IN "SEREMONDA" AT THE CRITERION THEATRE

WILLIAM DE MORGAN IN FLORENCE BEFORE WORLD FAME CAME TO HIM

He and His Wife, Who Was Known as Last of the Pre-Raphaelites, Bore Poverty Bravely and Were Unchanged by Success

THE first time I ever saw William de Morgan was at the studio in Florence of the late Miss Freeborn, the American sculptress.

Her studio was on what was then called Lung' Mugnone, now Viale Milton, which was and is one of the residential quarters of Florence's art colony, and it was in one of the studio apartments there that the De Morgans had their home until about three years ago, they returned to England to make the Chelsea home where he died.

Miss Freeborn, at the time when I saw Mr. De Morgan first, had deserted artistic unconsciousness and was putting "meaning" into her marbles. To elucidate this inner significance on her at home days she would take her callers in successive groups to one after another of her productions, delivering, as the procession moved along, a species of running lecture or talk. The group in which the hour of my call placed me was almost completing its tour of the spacious and high ceiled studio when two new arrivals entered. I can see them now, two of the strangest looking persons my uninitiated eyes yet had seen.

Tall, thin to emaciation, gray haired with delicate face and straggling beard, the man was clad in a shabby suit and coarse dark gray flannel shirt, open at the throat; his companion, slight, much younger looking, with the worried face of the wife of an unsuccessful artist, in what seemed the last contents of an æsthetic wardrobe of the '80s.

Our hostess stopped short, joy, deference in her eyes.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "how pleased I am to see you!" and then, as they motioned her to continue the inspection of her works, she announced sotto voce: "De Morgan, the famous potter, and his wife, the last of the Pre-Raphaelites. She's the niece of Spencer Stanhope, who decorated Holy Trinity."

Holy Trinity is the English church of Via Lamarmora, the one made use of by Mrs. Humphry Ward for the scene of the marriage in "Lady Rose's Daughter." Owing to its having no windows, under an old Italian law for Protestant churches, its decorating and modernizing is one of the modern artistic triumphs of Florence; hence the mention of Spencer Stanhope.

The lecture over, the visitors filed to the free space of the studio where the De Morgans had seated themselves and some young girl served tea. The talk was all by the hostess and the De Morgans.

I had never seen a potter, nor yet a Pre-Raphaelite, nor, being new to the Florence colony, had I ever heard such talk. It was all about art by people whose standards were perfectly established in the old esoteric language of that famous circle of the Ruskin day, of whom, now that De Morgan is dead, there are left in Florence of the old shining lights only Vernon Lee, Henry Newman, the American artist, once Ruskin's draughtsman and well known as a painter of the Nile, and Ruskin's "Francesca," (Mrs. Fanny Alexander), blind, nearly 80 and living in an old palace in Piazza Santa Maria Novella.

As I watched the De Morgans that day there came to me something I can never lose, and that is a realization of the perfect democracy of the aristocracy. Evidently well born, yet in these strange garments, plainly poor, their talk showed them to belong to the best Florentine society, name after name prefaced by English or Italian titles naturally punctuating their conversation. I have never seen two people more at ease in artistic shabbiness nor two who left a more distinct sense of not being shabby in aught but raiment.

De Morgan made me think of Don Quixote, and excited a desire to place before him a huge slice of English roast beef, so thin, so lanky, so bloodless did he look. Mrs. De Morgan, or "Evelyn," as nearly all the old Florentine circle called her, gave the effect of some bewildered follower of Rossetti or Burne-Jones having strayed from some cruel blast into the garish day of that modern studio.

Mr. De Morgan then was making his tiles. One of the old artists told me that the cause of their not selling had nothing to do with the tiles from the art standpoint. The trouble was that Mr. De Morgan could not manufacture them in quantities sufficient to make the price low enough to invite purchasers. It was always a little of a sore point with Mr. De Morgan that his tiles, over which he spent so much of his life and which in themselves reflected his sense of art, only gained their sale through his fame. Several years ago it was impossible to buy one at any price in Florence, the cult for the De Morgan tile having exhausted the supply.

It was the same with Mrs. De Morgan's Pre-Raphaelite drawings and paintings. For years they adorned her studio. Her husband famous, no Florence exhibition was complete without an Evelyn De Morgan drawing, though the young girl artists in the studios painting their wild "Women Who Go Alone" never took quietly Mrs. De Morgan's exquisitely delicate and painstaking "Evening Star" angels and æsthetic faced maidens.

I often saw Mr. De Morgan after that, encountering in the studio or on the Lung' Mugnone a quaint, thin figure, wearing that workman's flannel shirt and marked by that gray look of the unsuccessful man. Not that lack of success ever matters in Florence. In the De Morgan set what counted only was that esoteric code of art standards, though the De Morgans themselves never seemed pretentious about it.

It was the most self-centred of circles, sufficient in itself, and putting no value on fashion. If Vernon Lee had her villa, the De Morgans had their studio, the Newmans their apartment, the Alexanders their palace. The thing was that all had correct standards of art and all had priceless possessions of those old treasures of Florentine art, collected in bygone days for a song. Henry James, when he occupied a villa at Bellosguardo, was part of it and so was Constance Fenimore Woolson.

To be admitted to the remnant of its circle remaining to-day is to hear stories of De Morgan in his youth, of how "Joseph Vance" is much more the story of his father, Augustus De Morgan, the mathematician, than even De Morgan confessed. At these old houses, as the tale goes on, James, Watts, Ruskin, all the rest of them seem to come in like wraiths to enjoy a cup of the "Countess's tea," as they were wont to do in life. The Countess who gave her name, from her introduction of the particular brand to Florence, to this famous tea, was Clara Novello's daughter-in-law, the Countess Gigliucci, and many a cup did De Morgan drink.

Then came "Joseph Vance" and "Alice-for-Short" and all Florence exclaimed: "Why, it's Evelyn Stanhope's husband, De Morgan, the potter, who has written these books!" and behold Mr. De Morgan, the author, on the Via Tornabuoni, tall, lanky still, but in excellent clothes, conventional shirt, and all that gray look of the harassed unsuccessful man gone forever. It was a beautiful sight, for prosperity had no effect on the kindliness of the delicate featured face.

Repose, dignity, the consciousness of not having failed himself had softened every austerity and given his aging face that look of content which beautifies. Those who not only loved but bought De Morgan's books had a very large and visible interest on their money in effecting such a change in a man's whole look. It was the same with Mrs. De Morgan, whose good looks revived with prosperity and whose æsthetic garb disappeared before well set up, more commonplace raiment.

Those who knew Mr. De Morgan's life are always fitting his books to scenes or places they know of in actuality; 40 Fitzroy Square, where he worked in stained glass, reappearing in "Alice-for-Short," places in Florence, in "Joseph Vance." The story of the marriage in the latter is a well known tradition of Florence, Ruskin's "Francesca" using it first in her "Story of Ida."

De Morgan probably used the adventure of my own quondam maid, a romance familiar to all the old colony because of her having served a certain English friend of the De Morgans for years. Trapped into a religious ceremony only after the establishment of the civil one by the new Italian Government, she found herself and two children deserted with no redress. For years the colony ignored the misadventure, calling the lads her nephews. Some year or two ago the husband turned up repentant, legitimized the children and made our maid his heir; but this chapter was after De Morgan had written "Joseph Vance."

It does not seem so wonderful to those who know those old time Florentine artists that De Morgan took to his pen. Writers and artists mingle much in those circles, but art being put as the coveted goal, many strive along toward it regardless of the second, it may be the real talent in abeyance.

There was, to illustrate, an American artist of De Morgan's age in that colony who showed me the manuscript. Dickens style of a[illegible] early American life, [illegible] terest and written [illegible] himself. Also, when Ruskin's "Francesca" lost her sight, she [illegible] poetry, developing [illegible] talent and [illegible] Florence's current [illegible].

The last time that I [illegible] De Morgans was on the [illegible] parture to make for themselves a permanent home in England. [illegible] very happy over it, for [illegible] changing, the circle [illegible] England was home.

In Florence De Morgan [illegible] never counted a Pre-Raphaelite [illegible] melancholy laurels for [illegible] famous group were [illegible] wife, and her paintings were [illegible] accorded that tribute. Mr. De Morgan was more famous [illegible] great kindness to [illegible] pay him tribute when [illegible] ists. A young girl once [illegible] answer to her [illegible] permitted to be in his [illegible] for a moment!" It was [illegible] self, with all the [illegible] young girl's outburst. [illegible] too, that she come early [illegible] for tea in that old studio [illegible] Lung' Mugnone.

Florence gossip always [illegible] that De Morgan's gains from [illegible] her books were common [illegible] his lack of belief in "Joseph Vance" leading to poor business arrangements.